

R 211611Z JUN 96
FM AMEMBASSY LUANDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3212
INFO AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
AMEMBASSY HARARE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY WINDHOEK
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LUANDA 001811

DEPT FOR AF PDAS BUSHNELL AND AF/S

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TAGS: [SOCI](#) [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [SADC](#) [AO](#)

SUBJECT: STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE SADC REGION-- ANGOLA

REF: A) STATE 112270 AND PREVIOUS B) LUANDA 0738

11. SUMMARY: TWO DECADES OF CIVIL WAR HAVE WRECKED FAMILY SUPPORT STRUCTURES IN ANGOLA, SEVERELY UNDERMINING THE STATUS OF WOMEN. WHILE ANGOLAN LAW PROVIDES FOR THE FAIR AND EQUAL TREATMENT OF WOMEN, DISCRIMINATION AND POOR TREATMENT PERSISTS, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS. THE ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE BEIJING WOMEN'S CONFERENCE, BUT DOUBTS REMAIN AS TO WHETHER LEGISLATION MODELED ON THE BEIJING FORUM WILL ENSURE CONCRETE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE STATUS OF WOMEN. POST WILL CONTINUE TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S RIGHTS AS A CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVE THROUGH THE USE OF 116(E) FUNDING, DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMS, REPRESENTATIONAL EVENTS AND SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ACTIVISTS. END SUMMARY.

12. ACCORDING TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GRA'S STATE SECRETARIAT FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS AND THE INDEPENDENT ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JURISTS, THERE ARE NO PROVISIONS IN ANGOLAN LAW WHICH CAN BE CONSTRUED AS DISCRIMINATORY AGAINST WOMEN. GENDER EQUALITY WAS ENSHRINED IN ANGOLA'S 1975 POST-INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTION AND REMAINS IN FORCE UNDER THE LAW. WOMEN HAVE FULL POLITICAL RIGHTS, AND THERE ARE THREE WOMEN MINISTERS: PETROLEUM, FISHERIES AND CULTURE (THIS REPRESENTS JUST 13 PERCENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS). WOMEN MAY THE RANK OF SUB-COMMISSIONER (MAJOR GENERAL) IN THE NATIONAL POLICE. WOMEN FIGURE PROMINENTLY THROUGHOUT THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN LUANDA AND OTHER LARGER, EUROPEAN-INFLUENCED ANGOLAN CITIES. HOWEVER, ANGOLAN WOMEN LEADERS, JUST LIKE THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, WANT TO SEE MORE WOMEN IN POSITIONS OF POWER AND AUTHORITY IN THE RULING MPLA, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

13. BY CONTRAST, IN RURAL AREAS SIGNIFICANT DIVERGENCES EXIST BETWEEN THE LEGAL PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY AND CUSTOMARY PRACTICE. ACCORDING TO GENOVEVA POLICARPO, THE STATE SECRETARIAT FOR WOMEN'S DIRECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, CUSTOMARY LAW WITH REGARD TO WOMEN'S STATUS REMAINS IN FORCE THROUGHOUT RURAL ANGOLA. UNDER THESE PRACTICES, SHE SAYS, WOMEN ARE BARRED FROM INHERITING PROPERTY AND ARE OFTEN COMPELLED BY THEIR HUSBANDS TO PERFORM STRENUOUS FARM LABOR. ESPECIALLY IN SOUTHERN ANGOLA, FEMALE ADULTERY HAS BEEN PUNISHED BY DEATH WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT MEN ARE EXPECTED TO HAVE MULTIPLE SEXUAL PARTNERS AFTER MARRIAGE.

14. IN THE FEW AREAS OF RURAL ANGOLA WITH FUNCTIONING COURTS OF LAW, WOMEN ARE GENERALLY DENIED ACCESS TO THE JUDICIAL PROCESS TO REDRESS GRIEVANCES AGAINST MEN. ALTHOUGH THE GRA PLANS A SEPTEMBER SEMINAR TO ADDRESS DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN CUSTOMARY PRACTICE AND THE LEGAL

CODE, TRADITION GENERALLY WINS OVER LAW BY DEFAULT-- THE ANGOLAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM IS EXTREMELY WEAK, AND TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES (AND NORMS) HAVE FILLED THE GAP LEFT BY THE ABSENCE OF CIVIL AND CRIMINAL COURTS. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE EXTENSION OF THE REACH OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM TO EVERY CORNER OF THE COUNTRY WILL BE AN IMPORTANT CHALLENGE TO THE GRA, WITH THE HELP OF THE USG AND THE REST OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE PEACE PROCESS.

15. BOTH POLICARPO AND WOMEN'S JURISTS ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT GRACA LOPES NOTE THAT TWO DECADES OF CIVIL WAR HAVE ALSO PLACED CONSIDERABLE STRAIN ON THE STATUS OF URBAN WOMEN, PARTICULARLY IN THE OVERCROWDED LUANDA SHANTYTOWNS. LOPES REPORTS THAT RAPE AND SPOUSAL ABUSE ARE REACHING EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS AS MEN VENT THEIR FRUSTRATIONS OVER DETERIORATING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS AT WOMEN. PROSTITUTION IS RAMPANT IN THE SHANTYTOWNS AND THE USE OF CHILD PROSTITUTES APPEARS WIDESPREAD AMONG UPPER-CLASS ANGOLANS AND SOME EXPATRIATES.

16. THE STATE SECRETARIAT FOR WOMEN HAS PREPARED A PROPOSAL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THEMES RAISED AT THE BEIJING WOMEN'S CONFERENCE. ACCORDING TO STATE SECRETARY JOANA LINA, THE PROPOSAL IS "EXTREMELY FAITHFUL" TO THE TEXT OF THE RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED IN BEIJING. THE MEASURE IS AWAITING APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, WHICH HAS NOT MET IN OVER SIX WEEKS AND WHOSE WORK MAY BE FURTHER SLOWED BY LAST WEEK'S PARTIAL CABINET SHAKEUP. WE ARE RAISING WITH SENIOR CABINET OFFICIALS THE NEED TO PUSH THIS AGENDA.

17. OUR EMBASSY TAKES AN ACTIVE ROLE IN PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S ISSUES IN ANGOLA. WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OUR AID MISSION EARLIER THIS YEAR AND OUR ACCESS FOR THE FIRST TIME TO DFA FUNDING, WE ARE WORKING WITH AID PROJECT DESIGN TEAMS TO ENSURE THAT PROMOTION OF WOMEN IS A CROSS-CUTTING TOP PRIORITY OF ALL OUR DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE, RURAL REHABILITATION, AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. SPECIFIC GRANTS UNDER THE DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS FUND AND THE SELF-HELP PROGRAM HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR ENHANCING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY. TWO OF OUR THREE GRANTEEES FOR OUR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS PROGRAM TO PROMOTE CIVIL SOCIETY ARE WOMEN, AND WE HAVE ESTABLISHED A FULL PARITY POLICY FOR ALL FUTURE USIA IV AND SPEAKERS PROGRAMS. WE HAVE ALSO HIGHLIGHTED WOMEN'S ISSUES THROUGH OUR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY. AMBASSADOR AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICERS HAVE SPOKEN OUT AT HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCES ON THE CONTINUING PHYSICAL ABUSE OF WOMEN AND THEIR EXCLUSION FROM FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LIFE OF ANGOLA. OUR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT, WHICH HIGHLIGHTS THIS AREA, HAS BEEN FREQUENTLY QUOTED BY LOCAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS. WE HAVE SPONSORED REPRESENTATIONAL FUNCTIONS STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY, SUCH AS A HIGHLY PUBLICIZED ROUNDTABLE ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AT WHICH WOMEN FROM POLITICS, BUSINESS, MEDIA, AND OTHER SECTORS MET TO DISCUSS WOMEN'S ISSUES.

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